

MICHELLS DOYON: My name is Michelle Doyon. I lived and outdoor recreated for 22 years on the western slope in Colorado and Utah, and I've lived for 18 years now in Western Pennsylvania. The federal coal leasing program needs key reforms. We need climate protection reform. The Federal Coal Program accounts for roughly 40 percent of U.S. coal production linking it to 13 percent of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. BLM must assess the external cost that mining and burning federal coal imposes on society, disclose to the public and decision makers how BLM's decisions to lease federally owned coal affects the amount of wind and solar generation available in the marketplace. BLM must evaluate an alternative that would phase out federal coal leasing and create a plan transition of the federal government out of the coal leasing business. Taxpayer protection reforms are needed. Federal coal royalty rates are far below the 18.5 percent from offshore oil and gas and have not changed in 30 years. BLM should raise royalty rates and close loopholes that allow companies to avoid paying agreed upon royalty rates. Artificially low coal leases directly affect energy production competition and this low cost is undercutting renewable resource development. We need reclamation and bonding reforms. In my communities that I live in, Scottdale and Mt. Pleasant, Pennsylvania, there are many locations that are adversely affected by old, abandoned, unreclaimed coal mines, processing sites and dumps. We call on BLM to prepare a thorough Environmental Impact Statement under the National Environmental Policy Act that critically evaluates the programs's climate and economic impacts for the very first time. The review must be comprehensive in scope. It must be transparent with public participation, and the review must acknowledge the scientific consensus that the vast majority of fossil fuels must remain in the ground in order to avoid the worst effects of climate disruption. Finally, BLM has a choice in whether or not to approve proposed coal leases and should base their decisions on the public interests, the administration's climate objectives and how severe the project's environmental and climate consequences are. Thank you.